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THE

Commonweal

Economic Crisis

BRITAIN'S WANING STRENGTH

by David L. MacFarlane

Involvement in History

THE LAYMAN IN THE CHURCH

by Yves M. J. Congar

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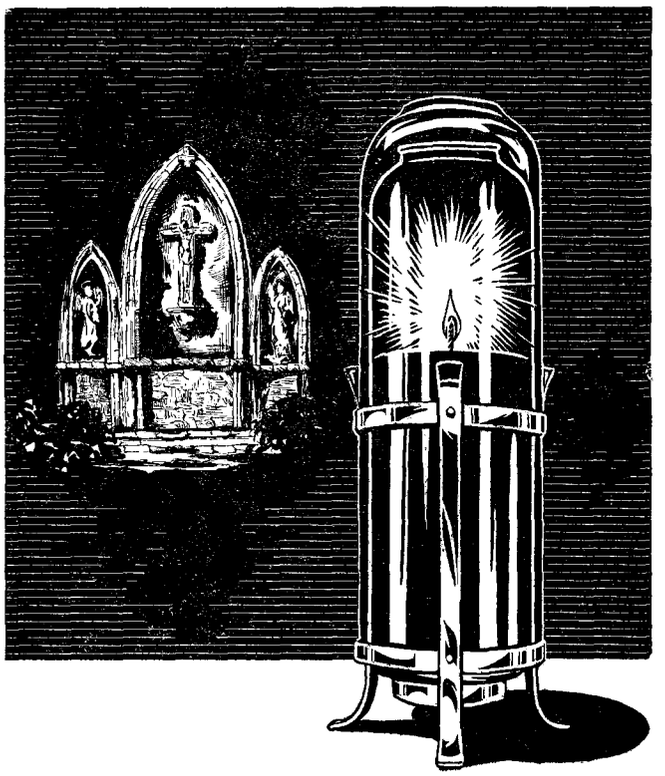

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THE
Commonweal
A Weekly Review of Public Affairs, Literature, and the Arts
THIRTY-THIRD YEAR OF PUBLICATION

week by week

"BABY DOLL"

WE DELIBERATELY refrained from earlier comment on the controversy over "Baby Doll" with the idea that the passions aroused would quickly subside. What we hoped for was an atmosphere less charged with emotion than has yet been achieved, so that comment on the matter would help to calm things rather than excite new controversy. Yet it now seems that the discussion is growing even more heated and the issues involved more and more confused.

"Baby Doll" is, of course, only one in a series of movies around which public controversy has developed in the last few years. Perhaps the most famous of these disputes was that centering around "The Miracle." In that case the effort was made to enlist the state to bar any showing of "The Miracle" on the grounds that it was "sacrilegious." At that time this magazine editorially opposed such a ban by the state. In brief, we thought it completely outside the competence of the state to determine what was or was not sacrilege, and we were unwilling to grant the state that power; we felt that it should have been obvious to all concerned that in a pluralistic society what is "sacrilegious" to one group can be dogma to another. Later, a unanimous decision of the Supreme Court followed this same line of reasoning.

"Baby Doll" is not another "Miracle" case. The Legion of Decency is a Catholic organization which evaluates movies and gives them ratings in moral terms; it condemned "Baby Doll" by placing it in Class C. Cardinal Spellman emphasized the Legion's condemnation in a rare appearance in the pulpit of New York's St. Patrick's Cathedral; his action dramatized the growing concern of the Catholic Bishops of the United States over what they feel is an increase in "objectionable" movies from Hollywood. No attempt has been made to use the police power of the state to ban "Baby Doll," and the argument over this movie is therefore essentially different from that over "The Miracle," a fact which the controversy over Cardinal Spellman's statement may have obscured.

There should be no question of the Cardinal's right to urge Catholics under his jurisdiction to avoid "Baby Doll" or any other movie he considers immoral. But in practice, if not in theory, this right is being denied. Although many people begin by affirming the Cardinal's right to warn Catholics against the movie, they then proceed immediately to argue against his exercise of this right by citing their own distaste for censorship, which the Cardinal's action is not, or their devotion to free speech, which his statement does not threaten.

There is a real pitfall here. Most non-Catholics reject the idea of a teaching authority vested in the Church and the Bishops as successors of the Apostles. But the argument against the existence or rightness of this authority to teach on faith and morals can only be theological—not political. Arguments against any Bishop's condemnation of a movie—or of suicide, or artificial contraception or mercy killing, for that matter—which talk about "thought-control" or "censorship" or cite "the American way" are simply expressing theological distaste in political terms. This kind of argumentation is dangerous, not only because it politicizes theology, but because it theologizes politics. And to turn politics into theology would make the American way, not a framework or system within which people of various beliefs can operate together, but an ideology with a positive theological content. The consequences of this shift would go far beyond the fate of any one movie.

But if Americans should beware of the tendency to theologize politics, religious groups must avoid

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even the appearance of politicizing theology. Here it is Catholics who need to be particularly careful. Overstatement and *ad hominem* arguments should be shunned completely. Catholics have a considerable body of theory on the relationship between morality and national welfare. But the line of reasoning involved is not simple; the application in a particular case is always difficult to make and even more difficult to explain in abbreviated form. In this case, for example, many people not only could but did take Cardinal Spellman's remarks as a challenge to the patriotism of all who disagreed with him. Perhaps a controversy over "Baby Doll" was inevitable, but if arguments over the motives and patriotism of those who supported the movie had never arisen in the first place, the discussion might have been carried out on the right issues.

One of these issues that should not be ignored is Hollywood's special responsibility in the matter of advertising. In recent months advertising for movies has become more and more sensational; it is now a commonplace for even the most innocent of films to be advertised in lurid terms. If, in the case of "Baby Doll," its producers consider it a serious and artistic treatment of an adult theme, they have no business advertising it in the way they have. If Hollywood wants to make adult pictures and to be taken seriously as an artistic medium, movie advertising should not suggest that the industry is simply a highly organized scheme to merchandise French postcards that talk.

Such advertising is a betrayal of many things—of moral standards, of artistic integrity, of the minimum sense of responsibility the American people have a right to expect from Hollywood. And it creates special difficulties for those who do not question the Legion of Decency's right to speak against any picture it considers immoral, but who disagree from time to time with the evaluation of particular films. These people think the present system is unable to distinguish between cheap attempts to exploit sex for money and genuine attempts to deal with adult themes in a serious and responsible fashion. The condemnation of films like Howard Hughes' tawdry "The Outlaw" does not distress them; what they fear is that under this system "Oedipus Rex" might receive the same condemnation. In this case, their argument receives additional strength from the fact that the Catholic evaluating body in England did not condemn "Baby Doll" but said it was suitable only for adults.

It does seem to us that this is an aspect of the problem that deserves more serious attention and discussion than it has yet received in Catholic circles in America. There will be more cases like "Baby Doll"—though we hope the issues in them will not be so hopelessly muddled. Movies in the future can be expected to turn more and more to adult themes which cannot be handled on television. Public confidence in the aesthetic competence as well as in the moral training of evaluating groups will therefore become more essential than ever. A certain tension will probably always exist between artist and moralist, but it hardly seems necessary for us to live in a state of constant crisis, passing from one "Baby Doll" controversy to another.

THE POPE'S MESSAGE

IN VIEW of the "turbulent changes" of the past decade, and the holocaust that coincided with the first years of his pontificate, Pius XII has been unceasing in his efforts for world peace. Each Christmas his broadcast to the faithful and to the world has focused attention on certain obstacles to the achievement of international peace. And his recommendations of various means of attaining and preserving peace in these historic messages have been plentiful and thorough-going. When Pope Pius spoke over the airways again this Christmas on "the inexhaustible mystery of the Nativity of Our Lord," it was to give heart to men fearful of the outbreak of another war. It was to outline in a vigorous manner the possibilities of peace.

In the Pope's view the peoples of the peace-loving nations are threatened both from within and without. The failure of the "second technological revolution" to produce the plenty and security which its enthusiasts had promised brought about a "painful contradiction" which breeds a new and widespread sense of fear and insecurity. The error at the base of all this is a secularism which proclaims man's self-sufficiency and an attempt to create a society which fails to take into sufficient account man's free will and the religion "which this liberty fosters and approves."

These peoples are, moreover, threatened from without by "an enemy determined to impose on all peoples, in one way or another, a special and intolerable way of life." Peace under these circumstances requires of nations that they exercise their legitimate rights of self-defense (but hardly that they resort to preventive war, as *Pravda* so rudely alleges). It means that ways must be found to restore Europe's solidarity. It places great responsibilities upon the United Nations.

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The UN, for one thing, should develop an adequate international police force capable of affording protection to any nation whose integrity is threatened. Pope Pius also maintains that any of the United Nations which refuse to permit UN observers to enter their territory should be denied "the exercise of their rights as members of this organization." Disarmament, which is so greatly to be desired, can come about only through a greatly strengthened UN able to inspect and supervise the necessary steps. The Pope's address contains unmistakable references to Hungary and to President Eisenhower's much debated aerial inspection proposal.

The obstacles are many and the ways of overcoming them are difficult and complex. But the unwavering objective, the Christian objective, of all these measures is peace—peace, which Pope Pius describes as "free man's most valuable possession, this life's inestimable treasure, the fruit of men's effort, but also a precious gift of God."

A REPORTER IN CHINA

WILLIAM WORTHY, reporter for the *Afro-American,* is now in Communist China. He entered that country in defiance of the State Department's ban on the entry of U.S. newspapermen into China. By his vigorous action he has called into question, as sharply as possible, the wisdom of the State Department's action.

The State Department originally imposed the ban on the grounds that the presence of U.S. correspondents in Communist China would imply some kind of moral sanction of Chou's regime. This proposition was easily and immediately disposed of by newspapermen. There were many instances, in the past and the present, in which correspondents reported from within countries whose policies and leadership the United States condemned and actively opposed. Surely there were none who thought that the United States approved the brutal butchering of the Hungarian people because it had competent correspondents and photographers who spread news of the infamy across the free world.

Our State Department undoubtedly encounters with Communist China problems which are different from those posed by European Communist countries. But are East and West so very different that we must close the door on competent reporting from China and encourage it from Eastern Europe? Clearly Mr. Worthy, his editor, and the newspapers who have applauded his action think not.

What action the State Department will take against Mr. Worthy when he returns is uncertain. At the moment it has merely "deplored" his violation of the ban. If it intends to do much more, it should certainly find stronger grounds for the ban than it has yet provided. And one can hope that the State Department will reconsider its ban—and withdraw it.

BAD DROUGHT

THE FACT that in the postwar years American acreages have been geared to make up for European farmlands that had been turned into battlefields has had a lot to do with the size and persistence of our farm surpluses. Likewise, abnormal war demands have made the effects of a prolonged drought in the Southwest more pronounced, for large tracts best suited for grazing were plowed up and sown with cereal grain.

The extent of the present disaster can be indicated by the half billion dollars federal relief poured into the area in the past four years. The proud state of Texas, virtually all of which had its last good rain in 1949, has a hundred thousand in the rural areas subsisting on federal relief food, while three times that number are deserting the land each year in hopes of a livelihood in the city. With soil blown away, even breeding cattle and laying hens have had to be slaughtered. Except for the proposal of a billion-dollar irrigation canal to connect the Texas rivers, the only remedies advanced seem to be the reseeding and forestation techniques utilized by the Soil Conservation Service to reclaim much of the Dust Bowl of the 1930's.

"COMMUNISM" IN SOUTH AFRICA

IN A RECENT letter to the New York *Times,* George Houser called attention to injustices in South Africa. Because the crisis over the Suez Canal is of such obvious significance and has so captured world attention, it would be easy to overlook lesser disturbances in Africa, a continent large enough to hide a multitude of injustices. Mr. Houser's letter is important, therefore, because it calls attention to these injustices and to the work being done by the American Committee on Africa, of which he is the Executive Director. And it is important beyond this for the lesson South Africa has for the United States today.

In December the South African Government arrested over one hundred fifty persons on charges

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of treason. Several of those arrested have visited, taught and lectured in the United States. By informed Africans and Europeans they are known to be genuinely moderate in their approach to the very real difficulties of South African *apartheid*. Yet they can probably be convicted as traitors under the government's Suppression of Communism Act, which is so vaguely formulated that it can embrace almost every non-white person who belongs to an organization. At present a distinguished group of churchmen are defending those now held as traitors.

The injustices of which Mr. Houser writes belong to South Africa. We do not have their equal here. But we have seen the time, which is not wholly past, when individuals would attempt to bury under the charge of "Communist" all those with whom they sharply disagreed. South Africa shows how far such injustices can be extended. In aiding the South Africans we not only defend their rights, but we strengthen our rights at home.

THEOLOGY UNLIMITED

SINCE religion is a subject upon which Americans, as a people, have agreed to disagree, mass-circulation magazines face the danger of having even their most scrupulously neutral exposition of religious subjects offend more readers than it pleases. Such, at any rate, may well be the reaction to a pictorial essay on the Christian Sacraments which appeared recently in *Life* magazine. But, in addition to this almost inevitable reaction, the *Life* article seems open to more serious objection.

The theology of the Sacraments is both subtle and complex. The history of the Sacraments, particularly in Protestant Christianity is, like any historical development, colored by factors of culture and philosophy as well as by theology. Of such complexities the reader of the *Life* article is left mercifully unaware; he will also, we dare say, be left somewhat confused.

To cite but one example, the reader is told on the first page of the article that the essence of the Christian faith is expressed in the Sacraments and that Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox Catholics and many Episcopalians "practice" all seven Sacraments; that most Protestants accept only Baptism and Communion, and further differ from Catholics by holding that the effects of the Sacraments follow only from the faith of the believer. Then, as though they suddenly realized that they had permitted the demon of honest and deep religious differences to enter their pages, the editors of *Life* exorcised him with an irenic statement utterly innocent of theological content: "But all Christians everywhere are united in allegiance to what the Sacraments represent—the faith kindled twenty centuries ago by the birth of Christ."

The same pattern is followed in dealing with each of the Sacraments. After detailing with acceptable accuracy, for example, the profound differences of belief which divide the Christian churches with regard to Holy Communion, the editors add an ecumenical comment which ignores these differences and, as a result, represents a kind of theological Esperanto: "But all [Christians] agree on the immense significance of Communion, for in partaking of Christ's presence a believer partakes of Christ Himself and nourishes his soul for eternal life."

What is involved here goes far beyond the importance of this article, for the editors of *Life* are simply following the practice of many other well-intentioned people in dealing with the fact of religious pluralism in the United States. For such people, the differences in belief between Protestants and Catholics, between the members of the various Protestant denominations, and even between Jews and Christians, seem less important than the "common ground" on which the members of each religious group can stand. All too often, this search for the common ground involves a minimizing of differences in religious belief and practice, as though theology were unimportant.

Such religious indifferentism can, however, destroy the very thing it hopes to establish—an America where religious tolerance exists in the hearts of her citizens as well as in the pledges of her Constitution. For brushing theology aside, in effect, as unimportant or irrelevant, fosters, in the place of religion, a mere religiosity, a feeling of religion divorced from dogmatic content or ethical demand.

Just such a process has, in fact, already been taking place in America, as Will Herberg and other sociologists have pointed out. Its effect has been to turn a secular structure—American democracy—into a religion, and to invest the "American way of life" with a quasi-religious, almost mystical appeal—and we are reminded by history that Caesar can be a very jealous god.

We think it very unlikely that such an "American religion" will ever claim the allegiance of most people in the United States. But we must admit that we are disturbed by the ease with which the editors of a mass-magazine can obscure religious differences in the interests of religious "unity," and, quite without need, filter out theology from a profoundly theological subject.

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Britain's Waning Strength

"ON THE STRENGTH OR WEAKNESS OF THE BRITISH ECONOMY HANGS HER STRENGTH AS PARTNER IN THE WESTERN ALLIANCE"

DAVID L. MacFARLANE

THE PERPLEXING succession of setbacks or defeats suffered by Britain in foreign affairs over the past two years came to an abrupt end with her invasion of Egypt. Whether this is a real turning of the ways or represents the greatest foreign policy blunder since Munich can only be conjectured. What I am concerned with here, however, is not that problem, but rather the basic strength of the British economy in the present crisis.

On the strength or weakness of the British economy hangs not so much the success of British ventures abroad but—of greatest importance to Americans—her strength as partner in the Western alliance against Communism. With that alliance seemingly wearing thin, this problem takes the ascendancy. Until or unless an alternative arrangement is developed, there can be no substitute for strengthening the NATO idea. This need may require not only a new approach in American foreign policy, but one which takes greater account of intra-European problems and particularly the internal strength or weakness of the British economy in the light of her role in NATO.

Statistics give a very imperfect measure of international differences in wages or standards of living. They must be rejected entirely or be interpreted in terms of fairly prolonged observation in the countries concerned. Perhaps it is best to give actual physical comparisons: How much meat is consumed? How many T.V. sets are there? What, if any, are the basic differences in housing between the two countries?

One statistic may be helpful as a point of departure. Disposable income per person in Britain in 1955 was $750.00; in the United States, it was $1,640.00. This figure, as the name suggests, is what the individual has after taxes—what he has for personal expenditures and savings. The comparison is not as unfavorable to Britain as the figures suggest. A dollar in the hand of a British worker will buy the equivalent of at least $1.40 in the United States. Thus, rather than having more than twice the real income, an American has from fifty to sixty per cent more. This is a good measure of the essential difference in the productivity of the two countries.

Food is, of course, cheaper in Britain. It should be, since most of it is purchased in the markets of the world where prices are least, and the British do not allow their very expensive farm program to raise food prices materially. The best beef roast sells for fifty to sixty cents a pound. Milk is much cheaper in Britain. Other foods are sold at lower prices or at about the same levels as in the United States. Despite the end of meat rationing three or four years ago, the British, who in pre-war years consumed two and one-half pounds of meat per person weekly, are scarcely up to two and three-quarters pounds per capita. Americans, at the same level in pre-war days, have jumped to more than three pounds per person.

Housing is far cheaper in the United Kingdom. Well over half the factory workers and laboring class are housed in publicly owned or rent-controlled housing at rents that appear ridiculously low to us: fifteen to forty dollars a month. But a heavy price is paid for this. Private building of rental housing has virtually ended. Still more serious, the subsidized housing has made the immobility of labor a really serious problem. Workers bluntly refuse to move when the alternative is the private housing market.

Medical care, of course, is free, or rather paid for out of the national treasury. And it is more comprehensive than in the United States. But despite the fact that they give a splendid service, sometimes too much service, doctors in the United Kingdom are not a happy lot. There is great concern about rising to the better paid and more honorific posts in the public medical hierarchy. A surprising number of doctors talk of emigration.

The difference in standard of living is not great in terms of housing, food, clothing or medical care. It is great in terms of expenditures on automobiles, radio and television, and expensive travel—although it should be noted that the British have succeeded in maintaining their love for simple pleasures, for books, gardens and walking on country lanes, and that most women, even of the wealthy class, obviously have little wish to dress

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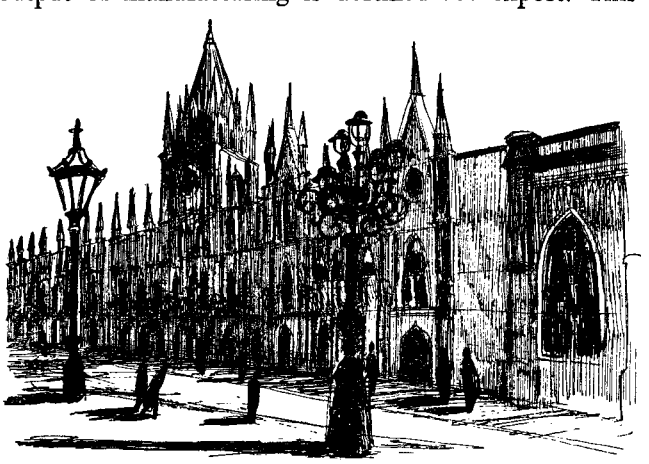
like the Paris models. In short, Britons seem to enjoy a moderately high living standard.

THIS MODERATELY high standard of living and the apparent well-being of the British people, however, mask a seething discontent among the working class and a serious economic situation. The difficulties go back to the immediate post-war years, and further. The tasks Britain undertook after victory in 1945 have placed an excessive burden on an economy greatly weakened by the war. These tasks include the role as major partner with the United States in the defense of the free world, leadership of the Commonwealth, assistance to the colonies, fostering a welfare state, and guaranteeing full employment and higher wages to labor.

Although the struggle which the British people have made, and many of the results they have achieved, are to be admired, there is evidence that the job has been too big. Recurring balance-of-payments difficulties, an almost constant inflationary pressure, and the too-slow growth of the economy despite substantial external assistance are matters of grave concern.

The British economy accounts for about one-third of the industrial production of free Europe and about forty per cent of the military power. But it has several basic weaknesses. The rate of growth has been remarkably slow—real income per capita has grown less than one per cent per year since 1913 compared with about two per cent for the United States. And while the three per cent increase in real output per man since 1949 is encouraging, it has been associated with factors which are far from favorable. These center in the wage-inspired price inflation which has caused frequent and serious balance-of-payments problems.

British industrial management prefers stability to assuming the risks which go with rapid technical advance. This helps account for the slow rate of growth. A further weakness is the extreme dependence on foreign markets. Between forty and fifty per cent of the gross output of manufacturing is destined for export. This compares with five per cent for the United States. The uncertainties of prices of both imports and exports, tariff and other restrictions imposed by almost all trading countries, as well as the multitude of trade and foreign exchange controls imposed by the British government cast a continuous pall of uncertainty over this vast segment of British economic life.



In addition, a large part of the resources available for purposes other than domestic consumption has been absorbed in overseas investment. In the period 1947-52 more than one-fifth of all savings in the British economy became capital exports, thus restricting investment at home.

ATTEMPTING to make good the inordinate demands imposed on the British economy has given rise to a continuing inflationary problem. This has led to four postwar balance of payments crises, each reflected by a dangerous drain on gold and dollar reserves. The most prolonged and serious began in the autumn of 1954 and shows little signs of ending after more than two years.

Beginning early in 1955 the government attempted to restrict credit by raising the bank rate and imposing limits on installment buying. But the 1955 election intervened and tax concessions were made as a means of gaining votes. This action spilled excess purchasing power and the government has since been attempting to mop it up. The credit squeeze was tightened by a further series of actions extending into 1956. In October 1955 a supplementary budget increased purchase or sales tax rates sharply and brought more goods under the tax.

The gold and dollar position worsened and the prolonged economic crisis brought on the year-end (1955) re-organization of the cabinet. Mr. Butler stepped down and Mr. Macmillan took his place as Chancellor of the Exchequer. He immediately raised the bank rate to the highest level in twenty-four years; cut back the scheduled capital outlays for nationalized industries; placed further barriers in the way of installment buying; and halved subsidies on bread and milk. Even after these drastic measures the cost of living continued to climb while gold and dollar holdings showed no improvement. But the government had exhausted the devices available to it from traditional "free enterprise" economics. And being of the strongest "free enterprise" persuasion, alternative policy routes were blocked. Thus the budget of last April was unusually dull. The government felt there was nothing more to do and did it.

Almost all the measures taken by the Eden government have been met with a volume of criticism seldom equalled. Much of it has been superficial and partisan, as might be expected. But what is most significant is the unparalleled censure which has come from objective

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and reliable sources, many from normal supporters of the government. These cannot be brushed aside since they indicate the nature and seriousness of the inflationary problem.

Two related but distinct elements have been present throughout the postwar decade: money wages have been rising too fast; and an attempt has been made to extract too much, in purely physical terms, from the economy. In 1938 wages and salaries comprised fifty-five per cent of the gross national product; in 1955 they had risen to two-thirds. Weekly earnings have increased by seventy-five to eighty per cent since 1947, about one-sixth more than prices. Even in 1955 the real purchasing power of wages outstripped price increases. Wages actually rose by about seven per cent, more than twice the increase in productivity for the year. This occurred not in a situation of full employment, but as the London *Economist* says, of employment "brimful, pressed down and running over." In each of the balance-of-payments crises the pressure which inflationary wage claims have exercised on costs in British export industries has been an important factor. And this has been increasingly important in the past two or three years as the German and Japanese industries have rebuilt and have become strongly competitive in world markets.

British gold and dollar holdings in mid-1954 were three billion dollars. By the end of 1955 they had fallen to 2,120 million, close to the minimum required operating level. As this is written, the position on gold and dollar reserves has worsened slightly. It is painfully clear that, with the resources of the economy fully employed, the seven per cent increase in wages in 1955 became a demand for imports, and particularly for dollar imports.

The measures by which the government hopes to overcome the present crisis are drawn from the textbook of traditional, doctrinaire, classical economics. As Cambridge's Professor Kahn put it, they come from "the old fashioned world of mumbo-jumbo, in which the economy yields to a few waves of the magic wand of credit." They aim at restricting over-all economic activity, thus relieving the pressure on the balance of payments. The government is in the anomalous position of asserting, in effect, that a reduction in the quantity of goods produced is a good thing, because of its effect on the balance of payments. This is clearly allowing the balance of payments tail to wag the dog, making domestic policy secondary to external considerations.

WHAT WOULD the Labor Party do if confronted with this situation? The answer is far from clear. However, Labor would place reliance on direct import controls. The strain on the gold and dollar resources could clearly be relieved in this way, but another problem would undoubtedly arise—further strain on domestic prices.

Labor would have no alternative but to hold wage demands within reasonable bounds. On this, with courage, they might succeed better than the Conservatives. Under a Tory regime, unions are tempted to make inordinate demands purely because they are ultimately presented to their political enemies.

There would be a strong temptation for a Labor government to solve its difficulties, especially support of the welfare state, by gradual inflation. This means nothing more than watering-down the benefits provided. The Conservatives have been doing this for years, but not as conscious policy.

Serious students of politics are fervently hoping for some indication that the Labor Party has a policy. The party's executive group is now convinced that welfare does not spell socialism. Its leader, Hugh Gaitskell, avers that nationalization does not spell socialism. While he presently asserts that quality is commensurate with socialism, much of the party, including the Bevanite wing, have grave doubts. To observers from North America it seems peculiar that in the midst of a crisis centering on economic issues the Labor Party discusses little beyond political problems. Apparently Labor leaders want power, not for themselves, but for the working class, broadly defined. In this context power means influence in both the legislative and executive branches of government, in industry and commerce, in cultural and artistic life, and in that phenomenon peculiar to Britain, the Establishment.

THIS GLOOMY situation in Britain implies that the strongest military ally of the United States, and the one in which the U.S. can place the greatest confidence, suffers from chronic economic difficulties that clearly effect her value as a partner. At worst is the possibility that Britain might be forced into choosing to service the internal obligations involved in the welfare state, at the price of yielding up her powerful role in NATO and other external commitments. The best prospect is that the inflationary situation might be halted by voluntary restraints on wage demands, favorable shifts in prices as between manufactured exports and raw material imports, a fortuitous increase in productivity, or a favorable change in the policy of other countries, especially of the United States.

The essential solution to these problems must be found by Britain. Yet it is important that the United States may have the power to shift the balance from the first toward the second of the above alternatives. Specific answers to how the United States might now strengthen the NATO community were given recently in "The Political Economy of American Foreign Policy" which presents the findings of a study group comprised

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of nine Americans of the highest competence and authority. These answers involve unilateral reduction of the American tariff; facilitating adjustment to larger imports; abolishing the perilpoint and escape clause loopholes; accepting dollar discrimination; continued American military and economic aid; maintaining adequate demand in the American economy; and strengthening the economic organization of the Western community. These policies are aimed at overcoming the unbalancing effects of America's economic predominance.

Without in any way condoning either the action of Nasser in seizing the Suez Canal or of the British in attacking Egypt, one can understand the British and French dissatisfaction with the way in which the negotiations regarding the Canal were proceeding, and their impatience with the truculent Nasser. The British cabinet has found foreign policy decisions very difficult to take for the past two or three years—due in no small part to internal economic difficulties. Indeed, there has been something of a foreign policy vacuum which was bound to break sometime and did with the attack on Egypt. Having vacated the area of decision-making in foreign affairs, the very respectable and able cabinet was apparently pushed into action in Egypt on a line dictated by the barely surviving remnant of nineteenth century Conservative imperialism.

It is hard to see how anyone could believe for a moment that the British action against Egypt could do anything but harm the prospect of insuring continued access to Middle East oil. There is no use in dwelling on past mistakes, however.

The United States must work toward getting Britain back on the track. This it can do in part by insisting on guarantees of free use of the Suez Canal. Further, it must not allow the Middle East situation to divert its attention from its legitimate first line of foreign policy—continuing and strengthening the NATO alliance, particularly on the economic side. Measures to this end are essential, and they should be taken soon.

INVOLVEMENT IN HISTORY

The Layman in the Church

YVES M. J. CONGAR

LAY PEOPLE are called to the same end as clergy or monks—to the enjoyment of our inheritance as sons of God; but they have to pursue and attain this end without cutting down their involvement in the activities of the world, in the realities of the primal creation, in the disappointments, the achievements, the stuff of history. The laity is called to do God's work in the world; not merely in the sense that its members should move heaven and earth to introduce into lay life what monks and nuns do in the cloister; or not again in the sense that, having to do the works and adopt the form of holiness of the religious life, they *in addition* do the works of the world, which religious don't have to do. There is a certain type of hagiography, not unknown in the *legendae* of the Divine Office, that perhaps turns the mind in this direction; and moreover there is too much truth and depth in it for it to be lightly dismissed in any discussion of these states of life.

But there are indications that God wills something quite different. Lay people are Christians in the world, there to do God's work *in so far as it must be done in and through the work of the world*. We believe that this is necessary, in accordance with God's purpose, and that His work can be actualized as He wills it should be only through a full, real participation in the world's travail. For the fullness of her work in accordance with the purpose of the living God, the Church has to have laity, faithful who do the work of the world and reach their last end in dedication to that work. This is essential to the Church. She has to have some members who are directly and exclusively dedicated to the work of God's kingdom, and for that purpose are dispensed from the world's work: such are monks and priests. So, too, in Israel the Levites were given no allotment when the land was shared out.

But the total mission of the Church, corresponding to God's design, requires that the Lord's reign be prepared in and through that creation in the perfecting of which man must co-operate. Therefore do God's design and the Church's mission call for the existence of lay faithful; they need a laity which, in its wholeness, is called to glorify God without lessening its engagement in the work of the world. The laity's relation to the one last end is perhaps less immediate, certainly less exclusive, than that of clergy and monks; but it partakes

This selection by Father Congar is taken from his book, *Lay People in the Church*, soon to be published by the Newman Press.

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of theirs in a secondary sense, with reference to the decisive fact that the *whole* of God's people is advancing towards its Promised Land.

The layman, then, is one for whom, through the very work which God has entrusted to him, the substance of things in themselves is real and interesting. The cleric, still more the monk, is a man for whom things are not really interesting *in themselves,* but for something other than themselves, namely, their relation to God, whereby He may be better known and which can help towards His service.

THE CLERICAL condition as we have described it is full of danger. First of all, so uninterested an attitude towards earthly things as such commands respect only when it is genuine and uncontaminated, especially in a world so concerned with sincerity as ours. Everybody respects Father de Foucauld. But there is great danger that an attitude adopted in the name of one's state, one's calling, should be too theoretical; that one should lay claim to its honor and benefits without having its spirit or taking up its burdens. And the scandal becomes glaring if a man claims to be disinterested towards the process of history and of the world, when he is really seeking power, wealth (in any of its forms, which are many), advantageous influence in secular things.

That, however, is not the biggest danger. That lies in a loss of respect for the true inwardness of things. The man concerned with the transcendent relationship of things with their principle and end, and more especially the cleric through his profession, runs the risk of forgetting that things exist in themselves, with their own proper nature and needs. The temptation is to make these things simply occasions or starting-points for an affirmation of the sovereignty of the Principle, or as mere means towards the carrying-out of some religious program.

When earthly disinterestedness is total, when it is truly a matter of pure religious relation, such attitudes, though perhaps still irritating, have something about them that is not only religious but unexceptionable. In the concrete, however, the religious relationship is actualized in a Church, through the ministry of churchmen. Church and churchmen have an historical sociological existence, and for religious ends they make use of means borrowed from historical and sociological life. The danger, then, is of withholding full respect for earthly human things on the ground that they are being given a transcendent reference, whereas concretely they are simply being used among the sociological and historical means of the Church—as when they are referred to and made subservient to 'accepted ideas' more than to the faith, to the conventions of 'the Christian world' more than to the requirements of Christianity, to the 'politics' of Catholicism more than to its mystery.

From the minute the (historical) Church is thought of in this way we go from one thing to the other on the temporal plane without hesitation or discrimination. Perhaps, even certainly, this is a sign of the Church's transcendence; but there is also unquestionably a danger that the temporal engagement should not be treated seriously, and that the nature and truth of the earthly things that compose it are not fully respected. This is particularly serious when it is a question, not of practical action, whose truth is less objectively determined, but of objective truth: in that case any sharp practice 'in the good cause' is a betrayal that no apologetic or allegedly apostolic advantage can excuse.

HISTORICALLY the Christian regime of the West after the dissolution of the Roman empire, and especially from Charlemagne till the coming of the modern world—which began during the last third of the twelfth century, had its age of power, spiritually, at the Renaissance, politically, after the French Revolution and is not yet over—this Christian regime, 'Christendom,' was marked by the organization of the whole temporal life under the supreme regulation of the Church and in her setting; and this meant that all relative realities were brought under [her] tutelage. It is no part of our present purpose to set forth the benefits that accrued to human society from this state of affairs, nor to examine the theoretical question of relations between the temporal and the spiritual. We will simply note two points. (1) In this regulation of earthly matters—the sciences as well as civil affairs—by religious authority, interpreter of the absolute, there was an element of confiscation or, to use a Marxist word, alienation.

This alienation was never complete, these earthly matters always had a relative autonomy; but, having been taken into the service of the faith, they were never considered and developed for their own sakes. (2) Guardianship is good for children; but it was unduly prolonged in fields wherein men had, as we now say, come of age. The most typical example—which the clergy can never think about too much—is clearly that of Galileo, threatened with torture when he was seventy years old and made to retract in a scientific matter, and when he was right: this in the name of Revelation—but actually in the name of certain 'accepted ideas' which were taken for revealed truth and sound philosophy.

It is against the confiscation of the internal truth of second causes by the First Cause that modern laicism rebelled; fundamentally it was a movement to recapture rights in second causes, that is, in earthly

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things. The various priesthoods of second causes rose against the alienation of their domain into the hands of the priesthood of the First Cause.

A superabundance of proofs could be adduced that this is the true, profound meaning of the laic movement —and of the modern world too. But are any proofs needed when the evidence is so clear? It would be embarrassing to have to choose among all the statements of leaders in the priesthoods of second causes—statesmen, philosophers, scholars, medical men, philanthropists. The following passage from Lavisse has often been quoted: "To be secular (*laique*) . . . is not to make the best of ignorance about anything. It is to believe that life is worth the trouble of being lived, to love life, to refuse to look on the world as a 'vale of tears,' to deny that tears are necessary and beneficial, that suffering may be providential; it is not to make the best of any unhappiness. It is not to leave feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, righting injustice, consoling the sorrowful, to a judge seated outside of this life: it is to join battle with evil in the name of justice." Forget the mockery and the irreverence: it is accidental and peripheral to the meaning and essential intention of the words. The real affirmation is this: To be secular is to use all the resources within us in that pursuit of justice and truth for which we hunger, the very stuff of human history.

HAVE WE then been asking 'What is a layman?' only to end up with a definition of 'lay' in the sense of laicism? Of course the answer is No. But in a sense the answer could be Yes. Because there is laicism (*laicisme*) and there is laicity (*laicite*), a distinction made classical by a declaration of the cardinals and archbishops of France; it is something like 'scientism' and science, the 'modern world' in the sense of Pius XI's Syllabus of Errors and the modern world to which we belong; or somewhat as there is clericalism and there is the Church. There has been, and there still is, a laicism whose foundation-stone is doctrinal, metaphysical affirmation that there is no God in the sense of the positive Judaeo-Christian Revelation; or at all events, no 'supernatural' according to the Church's meaning.

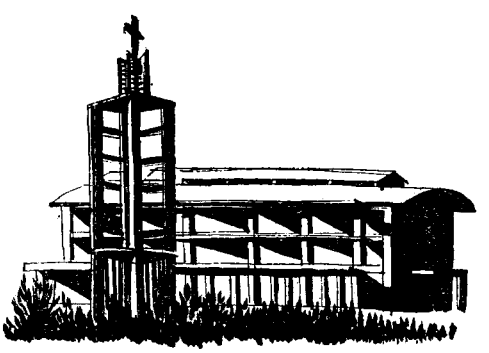
But there is also a lay affirmation which does not exclude the supernatural: it simply requires the relative not to be absorbed by the absolute to the point of evaporation; it says that reference to the First Cause should not do away with the reality of second causes and the internal truth of all that fashions the world and the history of men. This 'laicality' (if so barbarous a word may be allowed) does not refuse to believe in God; it simply asks for belief in things as well. It wants to respect their nature, their laws, their needs; it thinks that, given the unique Absolute, the one thing necessary, men as a whole ought to make their way to God without taking short cuts or minimizing their passage through history and the things of the world.

Believers are often reproached for not interesting themselves in things, for being content with purifying their intentions in view of God's law, and for not believing in good or evil *in things:* people today, since they belong to the world and to their age, have become hypersensitive to this reproach. Many Christians—in France, at any rate, Christians as a whole—are conscious of this peremptory problem, and it has often found expression in the self-criticisms that have been so common since the war. They see it as one of the bigger questions they have to answer, and perhaps the most important element in their insistent need to know the function of Christian lay people—or of lay Christians.

St. Thomas Aquinas was providentially set at the junction of the ancient world, sacral and monastic (but also feudal), with the modern world, scientific and positive, to help educate the second in respect for what was of everlasting worth in the first. He himself began as an oblate of the great family of Monte Cassino but his own intellectual beginnings were philosophical and naturalist, and the "Arts-men" of Paris looked on him so much as one of themselves that when he died they wanted his body, as well as the treatises he had promised them.

At one and the same time Aquinas appreciated the ordered unity of things—the most fundamental and universal idea of the Middle Ages—and the particularity of their nature, each one having its specific note and its content of truth. He is a model and a peerless guide for a world given over to technique and particular explanations without any unifying references, and suffering accordingly. He may be said to have been authentically lay, even though a cleric. . . .

The point, however, brings us round once more to this idea: a lay person is one for whom things exist, for whom their truth is not as it were swallowed up and destroyed by a higher reference. For to him or her, Christianly speaking, what is to be referred to the Absolute is the very reality of the elements of this world whose outward form passes away.



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THE "BABY DOLL" CONTROVERSY

THE CONTROVERSY proceeded like a well-rehearsed classic dance. Everyone said the things expected; old charges were repeated; the usual irrelevancies, exaggerations, and lack of proportion abounded; the "rational debate" one might have hoped for was doomed almost from the beginning.

Catholics speaking against "Baby Doll" occasionally sounded as if they were finally at grips with a really big evil in an age of totalitarian horrors; some liberals rushed off to the barricades as if they were saving the Republic from Torquemada.

Look at what actually happened. Cardinal Spellman, speaking from the pulpit of St. Patrick's Cathedral, found the film "morally repellent." Then, invoking the authority which Catholics recognize is his in the Archdiocese of New York, he "exhorted" his people not to patronize the film "under pain of sin."

The Cardinal, speaking as an American religious leader, also urged non-Catholics to avoid the film. Such films as "Baby Doll," he argued, weaken the moral fiber of the nation. Therefore he called upon "loyal Americans" to boycott it.

In addressing the people of his own diocese, the Cardinal spoke with the voice of spiritual authority. Those who accept that authority—the Catholics of New York—are bound by their own religious understanding to obey it. But this is a matter affecting Catholics only and indeed only the Catholics of the Cardinal's own archdiocese.

A few days after the Cardinal's sermon was given, Father John A. Burke, ecclesiastical director of the Catholic Film Institute in England, said that he could see no reason why adult British Catholics should not see the film. Father Burke added tactfully that it would be "quite improper" for him to offer any comment on the instructions of the New York Cardinal.

Of course the Legion of Decency has utterly condemned the film, so it may be said that the Church in this country has taken a much more rigid stand on the picture than Father Burke. But it should be noted that Cardinal Spellman was acting not as spokesman for the Legion but as Bishop of his own archdiocese when he invoked his full authority to forbid attendance at its showings. Other bishops may let the Legion's rating speak for itself.

The point to remember here is that when he invoked his spiritual authority to place Catholics "under pain of sin," the Cardinal was acting properly both as a Bishop and as an American. Americans who accept the Cardinal's authority do so freely. There is no policeman at hand to force them to be loyal Catholics. In obeying their Bishop and acknowledging his right to legislate for them on moral matters they are exercising the freedom of religion which the American system cherishes.

If the Cardinal's critics have a serious argument, it is not really with Cardinal Spellman but with the Catholic Church and its concept of spiritual authority. Let them argue then as Protestants, agnostics, secularists or what-have-you, not as Americans. For to deny Cardinal Spellman's rights in these matters is to deny the Catholic Church's right to act in accordance with its own understanding of itself.

Admittedly the controversy was clouded by the second element in the Cardinal's sermon. Because he called on "loyal Americans" to boycott "Baby Doll," his remarks were interpreted to mean that the Cardinal was impugning the patriotism of those who disagreed with his judgment that a film like "Baby Doll" weakens the nation's moral fiber.

Such a misreading of the Cardinal's words is understandable. It is not necessarily logical.

Others may properly dispute the Cardinal's judgment on whether the nation is seriously harmed by such movies, and many do. The Cardinal did not question their right to do so. Rather, he argued this way: 1. such movies hurt America; 2. loyal Americans will not hurt America; 3. therefore I urge all loyal Americans to boycott this film. A man who denies the first of these propositions will not follow the Cardinal to his final conclusion. But one who has read the Cardinal's sermon should not charge him with arguing: 1. such movies hurt America; 2. those who patronize such movies hurt America; 3. therefore all those who do not agree with my first statement are disloyal to their country.

The difference is crucial.

There is room even among Catholics for dispute about the intrinsic merits of a film like "Baby Doll." Most Catholic spokesmen in this country have condemned it as utterly worthless. But the English Father Burke, film critic for fifteen years, summed it up as "a brilliant piece of work on a decadent subject . . . obviously not the sort of thing for thoughtless people."

The question arises whether there is anything absolutist about any judgment made on a work of art. Such problems belong in the field of aesthetics. The nation and its leaders, especially the forces of censorship, may need more education on this point.

But there is no civil-liberties issue here. There would be if the Cardinal were not free to speak out on "Baby Doll" and if the Catholics of America were not free to stay away from it.

JOHN COGLEY.

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THE STAGE

I REMEMBER MAMA, OR SOMEBODY

LIKE THE rich, the family is always with us: aggressively present in literature as it is in life. The Greeks recognized this: Oedipus is incestuous, and Orestes a matricide—ultimately they confront the dark necessities of tragic fate—but in their sweet beginnings, all was born within the golden ring of the nursery. Miss Mary McCarthy has lately reminded us that the cook is leaving on the first page of *Anna Karenina,* and that Hamlet at the court of Denmark is really playing the part of the wife's unwelcome relation. And in contemporary bourgeois tragedy, it would not be possible to go beyond the domestic horror of the "Long Day's Journey Into Night": the winding sheet of misery unravels to disclose the family defenseless in a hideous intimacy of articulate pain: ceremoniously, the skeletons are taken out of the closet, and left squarely, like the massive shapes of Stonehenge, in the center of the stage.

Nothing to surprise here: life apes literature, and for almost everyone there was a life with father, or perhaps more ominously still, with mother. I have, indeed, seen a whole theory of culture posited on the fluctuating domination of patrist/matrist principles. Until latterly, the mode in drama was to work off guilt and authenticate one's self by *finding out* the family: how many dying salesmen have been arraigned by all their sons! how many mothers brought to strident justice because they failed to snip the silver cord! Now, adjustment has set in. Fondly we contemplate the dottiness, the cockeyed effrontery of raffish eccentrics taken down from the shelf of family indignation and dusted off with glee. Ever breezy in life—might one say, even, rather draughty—they become in the remembered haze of the memoir positively cyclonic. Yet the more things change, the more they remain the same, for this new dispensation of generous judgment is but a reshuffling of old values. Still the rebel is being celebrated, not for passionate self-realization now, but in terms of the higher morality of *having fun*: still the family is being found out, now as figures of foolishness rather than menace: prosy, didactic, spoilsport. Inexhaustible, indeed, are the protean shapes of the romantic ego!

For Mr. Patrick Dennis, bereft of parents and abandoned to the solicitude of The Chase National Bank, patrist law and matrist love blended into the principle called "Auntie Mame." Many there were who tried to put the blame on Mame as she dragged a willing Patrick through the enthusiasms of a lifetime—sidecars for breakfast, yoga, the unwed mother, Scandinavian furniture. From Auntie too, the eager, fresh-faced youth learned to mix that admirable Martini in which you rinse the glass with vermouth and fill it with gin. All of this Patrick remembers, but most of all he remembers Mame because she saved him from marriage with a tough little blossom of the Scarsdale nobility ("Sweetbriar is top hole, absolutely top hole") and pointed out the pleasures of a brisk interior decorator who hung a mean mobile.

It is difficult to comment on "Auntie Mame" (*at the Broadhurst*) beyond acceding to its randy, roustabout charm of broad farce. Lamentably, I might observe, it rawly flattens to the least common denominator every possibility of social satire, and the whole series of blackout sketches is designed essentially to exhibit the *chic* and delicious personality of Miss Rosalind Russell. Miss Russell has not style in the aesthetic sense, but she breathes the air of elegance and breeding: in her, not vice but foolishness loses half its fatuity. Her charm rests on an energetic spontaneity and authentic American zest, the object of which is irrelevant, and may be indeed only the impulse itself. Nothing exhilarates more than Miss Russell's leggy, democratically imperial stride; nothing disarms more than her panicky courage in the teeth of a malevolent reality. Her performance is a catalogue of the number of outrageous things no woman of quality should be asked to undergo, and the secret of Miss Russell's poise lies in her innate grace: possessing that, she has no need of dignity, remembering Chesterton's dictum that it is the last resort of mediocrity. I wish the authors of Miss Russell's play had respected this fineness of texture by not so often requiring her to find comedy in the meretricious and the cheap, but it is impossible not to pay homage to, and rejoice in, this handsome woman of urbane distinction.

MISS CORNELIA Drexel Biddle, by some triumphant strategem, survived the violent impact of her paternity. I may claim, however, no such fortitude, and the spectacle of her celebrated Philadelphia father tangling at one point, with a crocodile, proved too much for my sensibility. "The Happiest Millionaire" (*at the Lyceum*) is a laborious farce dubiously commemorating the gentleman, and it begins on a pitch of frantic levity which rapidly declines into the morose. Mr. Walter Pidgeon genially plays the gusty Biddle, and one wishes him joy of his carnivorous amphibians.

MR. RICHARD Nash sees the family in crisis, ruptured by neurotic stress, its scattered fragments mouldering with secret anxieties amid the smudged brownstones of New York's West Side. Nothing in the documented experience of these personages

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suggests that it is worth recording: Mr. Nash grayly exposes their Insecurity and Failure to Love, but dramatically, Love as panacea has become quite as boring as Sex. The most distinguished play in this subway *genre* continues to be Mr. Theodore Reeves' "Wedding Breakfast." Miss Shelley Winters gives an appealing, twitchy performance in "Girls of Summer" (*at the Longacre*), and one peripheral party scene demonstrates again — as "The Rainmaker" made abundantly clear—that Mr. Nash's genuine talent lies in a vein of domestic comedy.

FOR ALL the intricate webs of relation within which they move ambiguously, the major figures in the novels of Henry James—Isabel Archer, Daisy, Milly Theale—enjoy a degree of independent moral poise unattainable in life. They do not trail fringes, tags, raveled edges, as Edith Wharton observed; indeed, that is the Jamesian convention to insure for them a climate of freedom, void of check or restraint, in which the quality of the sensibility and the consciousness may be more richly annotated. Yet never in his densest thickets of prose and implication would James have permitted imaginary personages to drift about in so bodiless and phantasmal a vacuity as did Milly, Kate and Densher in a recent stage adaptation of *The Wings of the Dove*. In "Child of Fortune" (*closed at the Royale*), those august pinions opened to disclose not fatality and innocence and treachery, but a little drawing room of papier-mâché, trembling in the winds of melodrama. It was too awful: can we not let James' failure in the theater *stand?* We are promised this season a version of the plausible, possible *Europeans,* and await with pleasure the fine Jamesian asperity, but surely these barbaric disembowellings of literature represent the most conspicuous example of contemporary theatrical waste.

IN "SPEAKING of Murder" (*at the Royal*), Miss Brenda de Banzie, a British actress exquisitely fashioned for glacial depravity, and Miss Estelle Winwood, a frowsty tippling witch out of anybody's nightmares, have appalling fun and games with blackmail, homicide and a yawning, airtight vault in which, throughout the evening, most of the actors spend a considerable amount of time.

I PAUSE, finally, to record the phenomenon of "The Night of the Auk," the first play by Mr. Arch Oboler, a gentleman whose spectral hallucinations made dark my childhood. As I advance in age, and one may hope, wisdom, the pleasures of indignation diminish, but no quarter should be given this interplanetary claptrap. In the service of his cataclysmic vision of doom, Mr. Oboler enlisted the support of the notable producer, Mr. Kermit Bloomgarden, and three such distinguished actors as Messrs. Claude Rains, Wendell Corey and Christopher Plummer. What can have seduced these (doubtless literate) gentlemen into the conviction that a line such as "This of which I speak is no microbic truth" or "We are each getting what we want out of this lipsoid rollercoaster" makes either dramatic or linguistic *sense*? Oh Norman Corwin, what hast thou wrought! When one of Mr. Oboler's space-happy robots observed "Think of the weariness of a thousand years," and another snarled, "But where does your airborne insomnia concern me?" one could only keep one's counsel. (*Closed at the Playhouse.*)

RICHARD HAYES.

THE SCREEN

PLAYS INTO FILMS

IT IS ODD that movie makers, who frequently turn to the theater for their material, often forget to adjust the borrowed play to the new medium. The current, theatrically-handled film version of "The Teahouse of the August Moon" is a glaring example; and now two other new movies can be added to the list of "filmed plays." "Anastasia" comes off the better of the two—mainly because its story (about the woman who may or may not be the daughter of the late Czar of Russia) has a fascinating quality of mystery. Is she or isn't she Anastasia? The film never tells us; but Ingrid Bergman is expert as the hopelessly forlorn drudge who wanders the streets of Paris until she is picked up by a White Russian (Yul Brynner) and his scheming cohorts who are interested in the ten million pounds waiting in an English bank for the real Anastasia. They put her through a series of lessons, teaching her to walk, talk, dance and act generally like a Grand Duchess—scenes that are in themselves absorbing for their Pygmalion-like metamorphosis but which become monotonous through repetition. Drilled endlessly on the details in Anastasia's known life, the woman finally learns the facts and then begins adding a few of her own—and even begins to wonder if she is not the real Anastasia. But Brynner is not so much looking for the real Anastasia as a facsimile who can pass the scrutiny of former members of the Russian Court (particularly the old chamberlain played by Felix Aylmer) and the supreme test of meeting the grandmother, the Dowager Empress.

Arthur Laurents has written a rather talky script from the Guy Bolton play which was in turn an adapta-

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tion of Marcelle Maurette's play. And Anatole Litvak, an experienced director who knows that a movie should move, has directed the good cast gathered by Producer Buddy Adler in a rather static fashion. Although the De Luxe Color and the CinemaScope camera work are excellent, Litvak relies mainly on his actors and the mystery of the story for action. In some of the little scenes, particularly those showing a suffering Bergman worrying about her identity or those in Copenhagen involving the lady-in-waiting (Martita Hunt) who is helping the schemers, the film comes vividly to life. But in the big scenes, the picture is somewhat disappointing. The meeting between Anastasia and her Empress grandmother (Helen Hayes acting like Victoria Regina) and the later budding romance between the now-radiant Bergman and thoroughly confused Brynner seem oddly anti-climactic. But "Anastasia" should be approached as a romantic melodrama of the twenties, for it is just that, even if its makers take its hokum seriously.

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KATHARINE HEPBURN, who has often played the unhappy, frustrated female since "Alice Adams" in 1935, now has the role down to perfection. She has of course grown older during the past twenty years, and the characterization is now apt to be that of a perplexed old maid vaguely longing for love. In her newest picture, "The Rainmaker," she plays the familiar role—and plays it expertly. But unlike "The African Queen," which was accompanied by an exciting adventure story, or "Summertime," which had all the glamor of Venice as background, "The Rainmaker" places the desperate old maid on a drab, drought-stricken ranch in southwestern United States. And the story, in which this frantic woman makes her last stand to grab a man from the very few who seem to be available, is too obviously contrived.

The script, written by N. Richard Nash from his own stage play, is designed more for the theater than the cinema; and Joseph Anthony, directing his first movie, substitutes long scenes of dialogue for action. As a consequence the film drags, especially in the first half which seems interminably long. It is to the credit of the actors, however, that "The Rainmaker" does have a certain magic. Miss Hepburn, made to look as plain and unattractive as is possible with her fascinating style and face, portrays the unloved woman in a rather teary and hysterical manner demanded by the situation. Just why her thoughtful father (Cameron Prud'homme), her mean and bossy brother (Lloyd Bridges) and her young, affectionate brother (Earl Holliman) are so anxious to marry off this woman who keeps house for them and sets a very good table is not made immediately clear.

Her choice of the divorced and gumptionless deputy sheriff (Wendell Corey) as a suitor is probably the last resort; but even with him the spinster doesn't get very far with her affected airs and obvious out-to-snare-a-man technique, not, that is, until the rainmaker turns up and changes all their lives. Burt Lancaster plays this con-man, this dreamer who believes his own lies, in his best flamboyant style. He promises to bring rain to the ranch for $100 in advance. Without charge he frees the young, coltish brother from the tyranny of the older, self-righteous brother, and through an act of love he convinces the spinster that she's not a plain, unwanted nobody. He also persuades the deputy sheriff to see beyond his badge. Although "The Rainmaker" is too long and not very convincing as a movie, it has its exciting moments, thanks to its actors who know how to put over life's escapist and realistic moods, and who conclude that a path between the two is best. Miss Hepburn may have reduced the audience to tears during the drought with her poignant description of an old maid's future, but the film ends on a more cheerful note—with a downpour of rain.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

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World at an End

THOMAS MOLNAR

EVEN TEXTBOOKS and cocktail parties agree today that we live in a world which is rapidly coming to an end, and that a new world is approaching. In cheerful company one does not mention death, so the accepted term is *change;* our changing world, they say; or the challenge that we face under changing conditions. True, the philosopher and the historian are somewhat bolder: each admits (when the professional optimists are not listening) that civilizations are mortal, and that ours may be no exception. To help swallow the pill, however, most of them add an encouraging tap on the shoulder, and proceed to predict a "society of the future" in which everything will be plentiful, including cultural activities planned and canned by the commissars.

A refreshingly different note is struck by Romano Guardini's little volume, *The End of the Modern World.** As Mr. Wilhelmsen writes in his searching preface, Guardini's study is "beyond pessimism and optimism." It contrasts the classical-medieval world-view in which man was a servant of Creation, with the post-Renaissance centuries and their exaltation of man as master of nature. It then proceeds to show how modern man has been driven to ride technology (as the unhappy hunter rides the tiger in the Chinese tale) which he cannot tame. The more thorough his technological domination over nature, the less he can avoid constructing a new order of things, quasi-independent of nature, but so coherent and so self-sufficient as to constitute a new nature. In this artificial world "the crucial events of life—conception, birth, sickness and death—have lost their mystery. They have become biological or social phenomena dealt with by science or by a series of techniques." "Human nature is withering beneath the destructive hands of modernity"; the alienated man is thus born, no longer interested in his universe existentially, with his mind and heart and senses, but bent upon acquiring power; the tragedy of his present condition is that "while gaining infinite scope for movement, man is losing his own position in the realm of being."

*THE END OF THE MODERN WORLD By Romano Guardini. Sheed and Ward. $2.75.

Mr. Molnar, a frequent contributor to The Commonweal, was formerly a member of the faculty of the San Francisco College for Women and is now at St. Mary's College in California.

MUCH AS one agrees with Guardini's main thesis, one cannot call his analysis complete. As a philosopher, Guardini tends to consider science, machines, technology, power, etc. as entities which exist in a sort of historical vacuum, and which clash with another entity, mankind. But, after all, are not machines rather instruments, and as such, social forces or auxiliaries to social forces? And does mankind not assume new configurations throughout the history of societies? As machines are ethically neutral, their mere existence cannot explain the new orientation of mankind and the end of the modern world; technology "makes sense" only if we analyze also the parallel development of societies, and the ideological forces which motivate them.

The world that ended some time between 1914 and 1945 had existed on two premises: the social gospel and the technological method. The first asserted the goodness of man, which meant that he is thirsting for knowledge, that he is the best judge of his goals in life, and that he is capable of agreeing with his fellows on a rationally established common good; the second suggested that material expansion, pushing back the geographical frontiers and liberating the physical powers of man and nature, will result in more leisure, more freedom, more consciousness. The two, gospel and method, thus combined in one simple statement: from our material well-being a new man, a better man, will be born. This was not only a sort of unofficial public philosophy for three or four centuries; it was also the basis of our values and culture. It was the profession of faith of philosophers, social reformers and intellectuals, the champions of rising classes and articulators of powerful ideologies.

Was it a false foundation, as the disappointed tend now to believe? Was it, as others seem to suggest, a malevolent conspiracy against the architectonic unity of the Middle Ages? Our answer is: neither. Guardini speaks of the "spring-fullness of the cultural enterprise at the beginning of the modern age"; but he, and other critics, do not grant justice to the fact that the early enthusiasm for the cultural enterprise, from science to literature, from Copernicus and Galileo to Cervantes and Moliere, was shouldered by a materially and intellectually expanding society which needed science and technology as it needed freedom and movement. Ex-

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periment and enlightenment were weapons of a dynamic idea, the fruit of legitimate curiosity and of the inquiring mind.

Guardini locates the appearance of the red mark, the point of no return, not in the materialistic nineteenth century when "technology developed only slowly, at the hands of a non-technologized mentality," but in the recent decades. This diagnosis is correct and important: from Descartes to Renan, from Bacon to H. G. Wells mastery over nature and the happiness of mankind were proudly flown together on the flags of Utopia. Only very near to us in time have technology and the mechanico-human manipulative devices entered upon an unholy alliance in which the line of distinction between the human being and his tools is not always, and not clearly, distinguishable. With this development something almost unmanageable has been dumped in our lap. The reaction, under these circumstances, is often strongest against the machines, these bulky targets which seem to block the horizon. But is this not a misdirected attack? Shall we burden technology alone with the guilt of diverting the human condition from its grooves? Shall we not hesitate before we indict each nineteenth-century machine for giving birth to innumerable twentieth-century offspring? or see the devil's hand in that the steam-engine was replaced by the Diesel motor, which is superseded, in turn, by atomic energy? This is, to be sure, part of the story; but only the smaller part.

Technological mentality is not so much the *product* of the machine as the *symptom* of a society losing its natural reflexes and turning into a near-perfect apparatus. Liberated, in the last century, of its political and economic fetters, society has become very fast a cohesive whole of interchangeable units which operate the social apparatus with an increasing efficiency and smoothness. Transformations which, in the past, used to be accompanied by seemingly inevitable upheavals, now take place, in most cases, almost automatically, with the precision of laboratory work; "the champions of utopia," writes Gunnar Myrdal in his new book, "have now almost all they have been fighting for."

With the lessening of religious, philosophical, social tensions, however, the individual too has let down his spiritual and ideological defenses, and adopted—or has been conditioned to adopt—a quasi-totalitarian mentality. He becomes intolerant of new symbols and old which might challenge his comfort and routine, his somber distractions and spiritless complacency. Technology, if not directly responsible for this state of mind, certainly facilitates its domination. In this sense it has parted ways with the earlier exalted idea of man: while as an instrument it has proved profitable, as a symbol of true progress it now clutters up new avenues that we ought to explore.

IN WHAT sense may we speak of the end of the modern world? If we put aside our preoccupation with technology, and focus our attention on modern man himself, the first idea which strikes us is that he does not fulfill the expectations of the prophets of a better world. The ideal of the social gospel was the autonomous man who would follow, on the strength of his own inner resources and aspirations, the imperatives of the divine Law, and retain, voluntarily, the main lines of the classical world view. The nineteenth century still sang the praises of the soon-to-come universal man, as wise and noble as the ancient sage. This was, at any rate, the central teaching of the ideologies, and under their impact the champions of utopia proceeded to shape the new world.

The autonomous man, awaited as Santa Claus, never came, or if he did, he must have found the burden of his autonomy too heavy. He passed it on to those who were ready to assume it, for a certain price, the price that man has become manageable, part of a complex and standardized apparatus, consisting of machines, psychological tests, indoctrination, totalitarian parties, adjustment pills and How-to . . . manuals. The autonomous man was to end as the manipulated man, at the hands of Grand Inquisitors. As Bernanos said so memorably, we shall arrive at the gates of the earthly Paradise debased.

Like other students of the twentieth-century brave new world, Father Guardini stands in deep anxiety before the future, the landmarks of which are still half-wrapped in darkness. But as the modern world lives under the fascination of the future, and rushes breathlessly to meet it half-way, Guardini is able to discern the dominant features: namely, that an "anonymous world" is closing in upon us, and that in this world God-centered man will be a lonely traveler, "placeless and unprotected."

Will he survive? Let us assume, with Guardini, that he will. What is certain, then, is that the issues he must face will be clearer than they are now; as a member of a tolerated minority, his spiritual life, and we may add, his genuine intellectual enterprises, will not be covered with the cloak of social respectability. Committing himself to God and to higher values, he will tread a narrow, perhaps dangerous path; but his faith, while leaner, will also be purer.

Once more, these are not predictions in the ordinary sense, since Guardini realizes that something new is approaching, having no roots in the past, repudiating the past. Yet, what strikes one most in his book is his deeply human search for continuity; his hope that what makes the essence of the human spirit will be transmitted to the new world; his conviction, despite so many present evidences to the contrary, that even the psychologically conditioned man of the future will continue to seek the Unconditioned.

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Seeing Beyond the Lattice of the Flesh

THE FOUNTAIN OVERFLOWS. By Rebecca West. Viking. $5.

By JOHN F. SULLIVAN

AS THE Middle Ages recognized, the vocation of the artist is essentially an ascetic one. In the modern world, where the artist does not customarily take monastic vows, he is always subject to some degree of conflict between the demands of his art and the claims of the world. To an artist of Rebecca West's passion for humanity, this conflict must be most poignant, insupportable in time of human crisis.

Since 1936, at any rate, Miss West has devoted her great gifts to the task of reporting and analyzing the contemporary human condition, a task in which she has succeeded so well that it seems a little strange to think of her again as a novelist. Her long abstinence from her art has not, however, in any way impaired her superb talent, as she has now demonstrated with a new novel, *The Fountain Overflows*. It has rather been deepened and enlarged; if the new novel does not coruscate with the wit of *Harriet Hume*, it is radiant with the clear daylight of humanity.

In *The Fountain Overflows*, Miss West has represented in fable her own problem, the problem of the artist and the world. Her tale is not, however, thin disguise for a thesis, but a true novel, full of its own life, raising the problems of life but answering them no more than life does. A narrative of some dozen years in the lives of the Aubrey family, it subdues melodramatic trappings — murder trials, poltergeists, secret panels—to a superlative rendering of the storm and sunlight in day-to-day events.

The extra-sensory powers displayed by Miss West's collection of fey Scotswomen in this novel are, in fact, symbolic of the compulsive, involuntary endowment of the artist. It is an endowment which bestows insight, the capacity to perceive the cancer of the world, but leaves the artist powerless to take action against the cancer in any medium but that of art. Cousin Jock, in the novel, is shattered by this facet of the problem of evil: "What's the good of music, if there's all this cancer in the world?" Miss West allows another character to reply, "What's the harm in cancer, if there's all this music in the world?" This is the dialectic in which the novel is suspended.

Not all the Aubreys are artistic. Piers Aubrey ("Papa") is a writer, but in the prophetic, not the poetic sense. He is something of an anachronism in this novel's calm setting of Edwardian England, for if he was not a Great Victorian, he belonged in that company. By 1900, however, not only were the great ones dead—Carlyle, Newman, Huxley, Arnold, Browning, Tennyson, all were dead—but so too were the aesthetes and eccentrics of the nineties. In the vacuum that followed, the kind of prophet who thundered in the days of Victoria was no longer honored, not even hated.

There was a new body of thinkers —Shaw and the Webbs, for instance —but they had simply turned their backs to the great Victorian issues, the fundamental problems, and adopted the "operationalist" principles of modern science, for which the only valid problems are those which have practicable solutions. Piers Aubrey was thus left to hold a lonely fortress which had been bypassed and left to die, a fortress which he could not even hold in a gallant if doomed gesture, because he had a family to provide for.

His family consisted of his wife —Clara, who had been Clara Keith, a great concert pianist, her career abandoned to marry him and raise his family—and four children, three of whom inherited their mother's artistic gift. She and they love Piers, but they are made cruelly intolerant of him by their fatal power. The fourth child, Cordelia, is even more cruelly treated, for she has *no* art.

Cordelia is in fact a kind of inversion of the familiar type of the artistic sensibility in conflict with a dully respectable family. Her terrible struggles, completely misunderstood by her sisters and brothers, are to escape from this family so pitilessly dedicated to the altar of art. Through Cordelia, Miss West suggests that if society is inimicable to the artist (and the intellectual), the fault is not entirely society's. The modern artist and intellectual has lost, in Arthur Machen's phrase, "the art of humanity."

The story of *The Fountain Overflows* is told by Rose, one of the artistic Aubrey children. Though she is narrating these events many years after they took place, she reports them much as they seemed to her at the time. This may make for some difficulty for the reader in the beginning, when she sees as a child and can report the activities of grown-ups only as they impinge upon her world. It has the further effect of making it seem that Miss West is writing, in the earlier parts of the novel, at something less than half of her fabulous strength.

But in the end, the total effect is that of reality, the quality of real memory, so that the reader seems sometimes to be himself remembering this bittersweet childhood. And, as the novel progresses, Miss West's power returns, till at the last there is no question that we are reading today's finest English stylist.

Miss West has herself said that the theme of *The Fountain Overflows* is "the way that human beings look at each other inquisitively, trying to make out what is inside the opaque human frame." The Aubreys, she says, "were all looking for clues to understanding," trying to break down the limitation of what St. Augustine called "the lattice of our flesh" to see "what we are really like." She has also, with charming consideration for the critic, pointed out that "I only wrote this book, which is not to say that I am the best authority on what it means."

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I do not think, however, that what I have said about the theme of the novel is incompatible with what Miss West has stated it to be. She has emphasized its universality, while I have emphasized the symbol with which she chose to communicate—the symbol of art. For this novel is not only a wrestling with Miss West's own inner conflict, between the demands of her art and the cry of the world, but a plea for understanding made by her art in the service of that same passion which has been her motivation in the two terrible decades since 1936.

Mounting Grandeur

MARTYR IN TIBET. By Robert Loup. Translated by Charles Davenport. McKay. $3.75

By CLAIRE HUCHET BISHOP

IN THE early Middle Ages the meeting point in the high Alps of the present Swiss, Italian and French borders was a crossroad of Europe, dangerous not only because of climatic conditions but also because of bandits whose main refuge was the pagan temple of Jupiter on Mount Jovis. Tradition tells us that St. Bernard of Menthon and a band of peasants without arms routed the pagan robbers about 1040. He then established a house of hospitality to care for travelers, regardless of race or creed, and this remarkable foundation has endured to this day. In spite of modern traveling facilities, and of extended communication, the monks of St. Bernard are still called upon to go to the rescue of people crossing the pass, and it still happens, as it did in 1951, that they meet death in the accomplishment of their humanitarian task.

Nearly nine hundred years after the international crossroad of Europe had been made safe by St. Bernard de Menthon, and following a report presented by the Paris Foreign Mission Society, the St. Bernard monks were called upon by Pius XI to examine the possibilities of establishing a house of hospitality on the high international Asiatic crossroad in pagan Tibet. Ever since the seventeenth century unsuccessful attempts had been made by various religious orders to secure a foothold in Tibet. Pope Pius XI realized that what was needed, first of all, were mountaineers. The St. Bernard monks, expert climbers and skiers, were the answer to the situation, and in 1930 two monks left France for Tibet to select a site for the hospice "where the divine praises might be chanted unceasingly and travelers be given open hospitality." They chose Latsa on the busy trade route between Tibet, China and Burma. Like its sister European pass of the Middle Ages, the Asiatic crossroad is dangerous not only because of its altitude and wilderness but also because it is infested by bandits, and, of course, pagan ones. In 1933, three more St. Bernard monks left for Tibet and this group included Maurice Tornay.

Father Tornay was to be shot to death in 1949 by warrior lamas. He was then thirty-nine. The author of this biography has made ample use of his correspondence to family and friends and of articles which appeared in the magazine *Grand St Bernard-Tibet*. He has also interviewed at length Maurice Tornay's family in the Swiss village of Orsieres near the high Alps pass. He has talked with Father Tornay's colleagues who knew him as a student, reader of Bloy, Péguy, Maritain, Claudel and, as a novice, expert skier. The author has finally gathered precious information from those who shared the dangers of the Tibet mission. The result is an absorbing book, striding high places of this earth.

The mountain village boy is vividly presented, with his hard working and pious family, his gaiety, his outbursts of temper, his stubbornness and his ambition pinned on nothing short of the absolute: "Mama, is it better to become a priest or a teacher?" "It is better to become a priest." "All right. I want to become a priest." Words of a four-year-old, we are told. Whether accurate or unconsciously created by a tender mother, what does it matter? For they are echoed in his letter as a novice: "It is better to live right than to worry about living a long time." And later, when he volunteered for Tibet and was probed by his Superior into finding what his real motive was, he brushed aside traveling, adventure, even the missionary apostolate, and blurted out that it was the need of the absolute. Maurice Tornay had to climb the heights of sanctity.

We follow him in Tibet in the midst of what seems to be insurmountable material, social and psychological difficulties which he meets not as a foreigner, builder of a house of hospitality, not as an occidental bringing a white man's religion, but as a man living his Christianity to the hilt, having made himself Tibetan with the Tibetans. Without striving for the picturesque or the sensational the author presents an absorbing picture of that part of Tibet. His unassuming account of a life spent on natural and spiritual heights has a moving grandeur: a tiny speck of a man, lost in nature's and paganism's immensity, pitting his single physical and spiritual strength against giant difficulties. One closes the book wondering about the mystery of Christianity and of man who, as Maurice Tornay did, can live and die "pilgrim of the Absolute."

Quiet Mastery

THE MERMAIDS. By Eva Boros. Farrar, Straus. $3.50

By ALICE SAXON

THIS IS a love story without suspense, or hope; a quiet exploration of the inevitable. Its plot spans the course of time it takes Aladar, a young Hungarian business man, to comprehend and accept a peculiar situation. We know very little about him directly (except a positive intuition, never specifically verified, that he is clean-cut and amiable, a sort of European man in a gray flannel suit); we come to know him negatively, in relation to the objects in his life. Seeking, where there is nothing to be sought, seems to be his pattern. Recently divorced from his wife who left him

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for another man, he falls in love with a girl he sees in a cafe, who turns out to be a life-long inhabitant of TB sanitariums. Here begins the futile impasse between the well and the sick. For Aladar, illness is essentially an obstacle, something to be cured, to be rid of. For Lalla (and her strangely attractive comrades at the sanitarium) sickness is a vocation. She knows nothing else, is equipped for nothing else. She cannot be pulled or forced into health. And when Aladar's plans close in around her, when their burden grows too heavy, she simply resorts to an act of fierce destructiveness, in a climactic scene reminiscent of one in *Of Human Bondage;* but she is not a vixen, only a sick empty child protecting herself.

All in all the portrayal of this girl is masterful, from the first glimpse when one is dubious of her winsomeness—a bleached blond in a lime dress, wearing too much make-up, and named Lalla—through those moments when she is playing the game of being normal: going for a walk with the dazzled Aladar, wearing a hat that "made her look like a cat dressed up" and high heels. "She was the prettiest and most popular girl in the place, and he could see her now as she would have been without her illness; the Italian small-town girl parading her beauty on the Corso"; and finally when the bright pitiful game is over and Aladar realizing she can never really love him or anyone, gazes "with distaste at the protruding vertebrae of her thin neck . . . at the base of her skull where her bleached hair was beginning to show its dark roots . . . She looked dreadfully ill, lifeless, pitiful and somehow despicable . . . gone was the doll's smile."

In the exchange that takes place within Aladar—humility for humiliation—Miss Boros touches the core truth of relations between the well and the sick, the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor, everywhere: "It was he that had deceived her. He posed as her generous benefactor, when he was only a beggar."

Here and there are glistening bits: Lalla's rare revelations of herself, of a humanity and dimension, that are as welcome to the reader as to the frustrated Aladar (she seems to be one of those exasperating people who come from nowhere, whose statements about themselves are either evasive or incredible). She remarks apropos of nothing that she went shopping once in Milan with her mother and little brother. It was supposed to be a treat but they were bored and the two of them were swept away by a passing military band, marching ecstatically along the highway for miles, long after they had lost track of the band. "When people talk about happiness I think of that day in Milan. The crowds, the cheers, the band playing. And Peppino and I going on and on, going off into the blue."

The Mermaids is written with a high degree of competence and sensitivity—in language, organization and depth of perception. These factors, in fact, make it an interesting and moving novel, though the contents, per se, may not be universally attractive—little worlds within sanitariums, exotic locales, odd unclas-

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sifiable people, vague, inarticulate love affairs. Some readers may still prefer involvement, length, strong identification, the familiar — not tritely familiar but tremendously familiar.

In *The Mermaids* there is no deep involvement with the characters; the heroine is enigmatic; the hero is quietly passive; the author maintains a taut, even distance from her creation. This novel is for the reader who is looking for something finely wrought, and unaccommodating.

Lively Tribute

THE MAGSAYSAY STORY. By Carlos P. Romulo and Marvin M. Gray. John Day. $5.

By EDWARD S. SKILLIN

NO DOUBT Ramon Magsaysay's greatest accomplishment has been to save the Philippines from the Communist-Huk conspiracy, which was on the verge of taking over the country. For a long time it was touch-and-go. On his very first day as Defense Minister he accepted the challenge to go alone and unarmed, at dead of night, to a darkened Manila apartment to make contact with the Huks. This act of personal bravery—if not foolhardiness—eventually led to the capture of the whole top Huk apparatus; from then on it was simply a question of mopping up. Magsaysay later discovered that he had escaped assassination only because the vehicle carrying his intended executioners to that first rendezvous had broken down on the way.

This incident is typical of a career that makes even an unabashed personal tribute such as this lively reading. Magsaysay's first and longest battle was for himself and his family; he fought poverty unrelentingly from his earliest years. In World War II he was engaged in his first battle for his compatriots; he became a resistance leader of such importance that the Japanese put a price of $50,000 on his head.

When he took on the alarming postwar Communists-Huk conspiracy, Magsaysay had only a weak, corrupt and discredited government to work with. And then as President, with the Huks subdued, he declared war on the wholesale corruption which was sapping the strength of the nation at every political level. (Here it is that the authors choose to make a brief but unwarranted comparison with the problems facing President Eisenhower in his first years in office—a lingering echo of our own 1952 campaign.)

But this biography will be relished by those with a liking for personal emphasis in dealing with political figures—the stern integrity of Magsaysay's father, the historic role of young Ramon's battered Model T, and many instances of Magsaysay's unfailing courage, generalship and concern for others. Despite its great focus on the man, *The Magsaysay Story's* implications for the task of winning over the Afro-Asian world are considerable.

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An Age and a Mood

SON OF DUST. By H. F. M. Prescott. Macmillan. $3.75.

By EDWIN KENNEBECK

THERE IS a clear sky over Normandy; it is a February morning—a few years before Duke Guillelm will conquer England. A young knight, Fulcun Geroy, rides his horse slowly along a river. He comes near a new stone chapel and a wooden hut, built for the monk Raol Malacorona by Abbot Robert of Saint Evroult. Raol, Fulcun's uncle, is a leper; he wears a linen mask with holes for his eyes. Fulcun begins to ride faster, but the strange man suddenly appears in the path, and Fulcun's horse rears and halts. "Are you afraid of the leper?" says Raol. "No," says Fulcun. "Then you are afraid of God," Raol says. Fulcun, as always, is thinking of Alde, the wife of Mauger of Fervacques, a Flemish woman with plain blunt features and golden hair. "I can never leave loving her," he says. "I love her . . . with my soul."

It is about a year since Fulcun took Alde away from Mauger, thinking he was dead. He was not dead, and he came after them, with Robert of Montgommeri's men, and so Fulcun and Alde brought further trouble into the quarreling lands of Normandy. After that Alde saw how much killing and pain their illicit love was causing; in torment and fear she stole away from Fulcun and went back to her husband. Now Fulcun knows that he cannot have her, that she does not want him, because their love is a disruption of an established order, both in the life of the families and factions of Normandy, and in the laws of Heaven.

Miss H. F. M. Prescott tells her story of love and battle and fear of God with vividness and ease, in a few lines making the scenes immediate; she describes the weather, the landscape, the colors of clothes, the barking of dogs in a courtyard. She weaves the small concrete details of that era into the actions of her characters so that the people are genuinely motivated within the context of their surroundings. If, at a time of crisis and excitement, Fulcun must come upon Mauger's wife in the hall, Alde does not just happen to be there, but is "carrying in her hand a water pot for sprinkling the floor of the Duchess's room that was choking everyone with dust after all the hasty passing and repassing."

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Like Sigrid Undset, like Bryher and other respectable historical novelists, Miss Prescott is inside the context, explaining it in the emotional terms of her characters, rather than appearing to fit her characters into a milieu already given. She seems to revel in the names of persons and places—Montgaudri, Belesmes, Echauffour. Also, since the story is about notions of honor and duty, Miss Prescott shows, with economy and psychological plausibility, the motions of the consciousness of her characters—especially the slow, sure way in which Alde's mind gradually sees a thing, and her will follows. Miss Prescott expertly delineates the premises and deductions that a mind makes with its combinations of fact and feeling.

Why then does *Son of Dust* fail to reach the exaltation of either grief or joy that it seems to promise? Perhaps because it has a "happy ending," but more likely because of the way it is put together. Miss Prescott uses a technique that enables her to enter the consciousness of any character at any time. This method allows an author many conveniences that a single, consistent point of view must do without. And the multiple viewpoint can be used to great advantage—as in *Kristin Lavransdatter*. But there are risks in exploiting it for the sake of an immediate ironic or dramatic effect. To "turn off" a central character's consciousness when he is right before us, and after we have been seeing into his mind previously, is perhaps a good way to heighten interest and increase suspense momentarily, but, unless the author is very careful, in the long run it can make us feel a bothering awareness of arbitrariness on the author's part that undermines our sense of intensity.

In this novel—first published in England about twenty-five years ago—Miss Prescott has a less sure feeling for such uses than Sigrid Undset, has for instance, in her sullen, monumental, passionate trilogy of fourteenth-century Norway. The result is a dissipation of energy, a fragmentation of sensibility that fails to gather the personalities and situations of this story into one total revelation. *Son of Dust,* however, is not prevented from being a vivid, intelligent, engrossing story and evocation of an age, and the mood of that age.

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